SBCCOM's Weeks Sekowski Receives TOYA Award

Dr. Jennifer Weeks Sekowski of the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM) was named one of this year's Ten Outstanding Young Americans (TOYA). The U.S. Junior Chamber presented the awards at a ceremony earlier this year in Sioux Falls, SD. Begun in 1938, the annual TOYA Awards Program recognizes young people who are the best, brightest, and most inspirational leaders in America.

Weeks Sekowski began her professional career as a graduate student in molecular and cell biology at the University of Maryland. Her work focused on the carcinogenic potential of various metals, with particular emphasis on their ability to interfere with the normal processes of gene repair. Having completed this study, Weeks Sekowski turned her attention to the problem of breast cancer and was awarded the first Army Pre-Doctoral Fellowship for Breast Cancer Research in 1994.

Weeks Sekowski's groundbreaking research focused on DNA replication and the specific types of mutations that occur during that replication when cancer is present. Her work resulted in a U.S. patent and four peer-reviewed scientific articles, and is important in helping find a cure for breast cancer.

Refining her research, she discovered that DNA may be capable of carrying out repair within the DNA synthetic process and that alterations in those repair proteins may be contributing to replication activity found in cancer cells.

SBCCOM's mission is biological and chemical defense, counterterrorism, and homeland defense. Weeks Sekowski's work at SBCCOM focuses on answering questions about the health effects of very low levels of toxicants, thus paving the way to develop early medical intervention and diagnostic tools for biological and chemical toxins.

CECOM Team Wins Award

Earlier this year, a team from the Army Materiel Command's Communications-Electronics Command received a 2001 Honorary Defense Standardization Program (DSP) Achievement Award for its work on an Army radio system. The award recognizes acquisition excellence that results in an important contribution to DOD objectives.

During a DSP ceremony, Principal Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness Allen Beckett presented the award to the Army AN/PRC-112 Production Support Team, which developed the midterm strategy for upgrading and extending the life of the AN/PRC-112 radio. The radio, part of the aircrew life-support equipment used by the three Services and a number of allied countries, is the only protected go-to-war survival radio.

The team set the midterm strategy for upgrading and extending the life of the AN/PRC-112 radio until the Combat Survivor Evader Locator System is fielded. The team used performance-based contracting and key Defense standardization-based initiatives to ensure that soldiers in the field will have an upgraded radio with the latest technology at the lowest possible cost.

The team reduced DOD's acquisition cost of the product by more than 50 percent, resulting in phase one savings of more than $20 million. Simultaneously, the team achieved the right balance of reliability, maintainability, and supportability, resulting in an ultrareliable product.

JBPDS IPT Receives David Packard Award

Edward C. "Pete" Aldridge, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, has selected the 2002 Army winner of the David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award for calendar year 2001 achievements. The Joint Biological Point Detection System Integrated Product Team (JBPDS IPT) for the Program Executive Office for Chemical and Biological Defense (CBD) is the recipient of this prestigious award. Aldridge presented the award during a special ceremony at the Pentagon earlier this year. The team was nominated by COL(P) Stephen V. Reeves, Program Executive Officer, CBD.

The David Packard Award is the highest DOD acquisition award. It recognizes teams that have made highly significant contributions that demonstrate exemplary innovation and best-acquisition practices. The JBPDS IPT is responsible for providing fully automatic and rapid biological agent detection, identification, warning, and sample isolation. In October 2001, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed deployment to key installations and, within 4 weeks, the JBPDS was reconfigured and deployed for urban surveillance. It has proven effective operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with more than 99 percent operational availability.